

# Volunteerism and Capacity Development

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In the context of current debates on the future of technical cooperation for capacity development, this paper sets out the important existing and potential roles of volunteers in capacity development. There is considerable benefit to be gained from the multiplier effect of engaging and supporting volunteering at all levels in development in general, and capacity development in particular. The paper does, however, argue that further steps should be taken to ensure that the contributions of volunteers are more explicitly factored into capacity development programmes. Suggestions are provided on ways this can be done through local and national civil society organizations, governments at different levels and other volunteer involving organizations.

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## **Preface**

Recognition and promotion of volunteer contributions to human development marked the year 2001 at the local, national, regional and international levels in the context of the International Year of Volunteers. This culminated on 5 December 2001, International Volunteer Day, with the passing of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/38 which not only acknowledged the importance of volunteerism in development so far but also provided a comprehensive list of practical ways to further harness its potential.

The intense debate on the review of technical cooperation for capacity development ran parallel to the International Year of Volunteers but reflections and exchanges on the subject largely overlooked the important role volunteerism has been playing in this area. Nevertheless, it is widely known that there is no successful nationwide immunization programme, literacy campaign or low-cost housing initiative without massive voluntary participation on the side of local people. Moreover, millions of individual volunteers worldwide provide critical support to development efforts both at community and national levels, in public and private institutions, within and across national boundaries, in crisis or in more “normal” situations.

This paper aims at connecting the ongoing debate on capacity development with volunteerism as a key means to achieving desired results. It argues that by enhancing the enabling environment, the contribution of volunteering to development is significantly increased. Moreover, by virtue of the mass of people involved and the networks of like-minded organizations engaged, volunteering is a capacity development multiplier. In this respect, properly tapped, volunteering has a valuable role to play in achieving the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. I would like to acknowledge first of all the work of Dr. Brian Pratt of the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) in preparing the first draft of this paper. Thanks also go to Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) for their substantive contribution and to colleagues at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for providing useful feedback. This paper was originally prepared for publication by UNDP as part of its contribution to stimulating the debate on technical cooperation. I am grateful to UNDP for having agreed to the inclusion of the paper in the series of publications which have been prepared in recent years by UNV on various aspects of volunteerism.

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*“At the heart of volunteerism are the ideals of service and solidarity and the belief that together we can make the world better. In that sense, we can say that volunteerism is the ultimate expression of what the United Nations is all about.”*

*Kofi Annan, Secretary-General, United Nations*

## **1. Introduction**

This paper seeks to highlight the importance of the concept and practice of volunteerism to the ongoing debate on technical cooperation and capacity development. In its widest sense, volunteerism is far too crucial to developmental processes to be ignored. It encompasses almost all aspects of development: at the community level, within civil society organizations (the voluntary sector), both the private and public sectors, as well as in the work of individual, national or international service volunteers. The scale of volunteering worldwide crosses cultures and political systems and makes it one of the most powerful elements in development and relief. But despite the major contribution of volunteerism to development, it has yet greater untapped potential for local and national capacity development. Finding ways to release and utilize such potential should therefore be a core consideration in the debate on improving capacity development processes.

The growth in the numbers and prominence of the “citizen volunteer” has in recent decades been recognized as a significant social phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> This paper will, however, only focus on citizen volunteers where they are engaged in capacity-building. Everyday across the globe, millions of people are involved in a myriad of activities as health workers, in construction, as care assistants, as social activists, and in a multitude of other direct activities to strengthen their communities and the “civil society” in which they live. The common factor shared by all types of volunteers is a commitment by the individual to the common or public good, in that they work not merely for their own interests but for the benefit of others. *“I was a volunteer when I was a student in the United States.*

*I worked with disadvantaged people in the poor inner-city districts of Philadelphia. Voluntary work is a demonstration of human solidarity in action that benefits those who give as much as those who receive.”*

*Koichiro Matsuura, Director General, UNESCO*

Even if one small group such as the international volunteers were isolated within the broader volunteer community, it would still encompass a very considerable number of people.<sup>2</sup> Yet, “expert international volunteer specialists” constitute only a small proportion of the total global volunteer workforce. This paper will, therefore, be looking to the millions of people who make voluntary contributions to developmental activities and specifically, those contri-

buting to capacity development programmes at all levels: from central government ministries to community groups. Despite their numbers, commitment and impact, volunteers worldwide have not received due recognition, nor has volunteering been situated as a central component of international development strategies as it should be. The limited awareness of the role, scope and importance of volunteerism still hinders the effectiveness of development policies and programmes in their contribution to human development.

**The International Year of the Volunteer (2001) and its preparation and follow-up was very important in highlighting the scope and potential of volunteerism globally. It has led to a better understanding of the types of volunteer and their respective contributions. It also led to commitments by governments at home and through the General Assembly and World International Development summits to further support volunteerism. The IYV also widened awareness and participation in voluntary work to a broader base of committed stakeholders of both individuals and organizations.**

## **2. Volunteerism and Capacity Development:**

### **The Case So Far**

The perspective of this paper includes volunteering at the levels of community, civil society, and public service as well as individual expert volunteers. It is recognized that the word volunteer itself can sometimes be misleading or open to misinterpretation.<sup>3</sup> Rather than dwell on these distinctions, this paper will use volunteering in the wider sense of contributions which demand some form of personal commitment freely given and moral imperative, the dedication of time and other forms of sacrifice. In situations where these personal qualities are absent, people soon realize and the “volunteer” loses or fails to gain credibility. Volunteers who demonstrate moral purpose and independence generally enjoy recognition as people who are not simply agents of state or non-state organizations, and are regarded as individuals acting on the basis of personal principles. The resultant credibility gives volunteers a powerful voice.

In certain contexts, such as capacity-building programmes, volunteers can often convincingly present themselves as intermediary individuals able to bridge the gap between “distant” institutions and target communities.

## VOLUNTEERING FOR DEVELOPMENT:

### A RECOGNIZED FORCE<sup>4</sup>

Volunteering has in many societies and over many years been a major force for development; despite this, the importance of volunteerism to development has not always received sufficient recognition.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the lack of recognition of volunteerism reflects the failure, over decades, of economists and planners to take sufficient account of the informal sector in general. As with the informal sector, the difficulty in assigning “real or accurate” monetary values to volunteers’ contributions has obscured their actual importance to national development.<sup>6</sup> There has in consequence been a failure to recognize the scope and size of volunteering and incorporate its power and diversity strategically into development programmes. There is, however, ample and growing evidence of the importance of volunteering in international development and strengthening civil society.

Research during the 1990s, for example, consistently produced unexpectedly high estimates of the amount of time invested by volunteers in many parts of the world. Some of these studies are still being completed. However early results have already forced governments and academics alike to review their previous assumptions. Many – though by no means all – volunteers work in the voluntary sector and the figures from this sector are enlightening. In the studies coordinated by Johns Hopkins University, it was estimated that the “voluntary sector” accounted for around 4.6 per cent of the GDP of the 22 countries initially surveyed. The research revealed, moreover, that in addition to paid staff (19 million), the sector was sustained by voluntary labour equivalent to a further 10 million full time employees, excluding volunteers in religious organizations.<sup>7</sup> More recent research in the UK has calculated that every year, some 22 million people invest at least four hours per week in a range of voluntary activities, amounting to more than 90 million hours per week.<sup>8</sup> All the evidence suggests that such patterns can be witnessed worldwide, in developing, transitional and developed countries.<sup>9</sup>

Volunteers have always played an important role in the voluntary sector, and over the past two decades this has continued to grow. The “rolling back of the State” in many industrialized countries during the 1980s, led to an increased focus on non-state actors as providers of services. This model was then exported and became a part of the orthodox package of international development. An important implication of the rolling back of the state in developing countries was a renewed focus on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others in

providing services, often based on previous small-scale programmes. There have been many obstacles to scaling up the small civil society-based services initiatives, though there have been notable successes as well. Some of the variations have been geographical – for example, the establishment of large health services run by church missions and groups such as the Aga Khan health service in Africa; while in South Asia, microcredit has become an art form on a massive scale, along with the provision of primary education. In the late 1990s, there emerged increased recognition that a weak state was neither propitious for development nor, ironically, for the fostering of a strong civil society. Hence, international development policy swung back slightly towards greater acknowledgement of the roles and functions of the state. Nevertheless, the scale and contribution of the voluntary sector and volunteers internationally have been both recognized and enshrined in legislation and development plans.<sup>10</sup>

## THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

*“We are convinced that volunteering enjoys wide-range people participation, and the benefits from volunteering encompass all ages, gender, religion, cultures, nationalities or socio-economic status.”*

*Beijing Declaration, International Conference on Voluntary Service, 27–28 May 2002*

The Beijing Declaration above clearly recognized the almost universal presence of volunteerism. Domestic or local forms of volunteering, especially voluntary activity at the community level, are visible in many societies across the globe. In the Andes, for example, *mingas* or *faenas* are traditional ways of communities coming together to share labour, usually for the common good. Similar traditions exist in Africa and Asia. Records show that these forms of reciprocal labour can be traced back many centuries.

In the contemporary context, these traditions have not only survived in rural communities, but have also been transferred to urban settings and are routinely adopted in modern infrastructure projects. These traditions in many countries offer safety nets (especially in times of crisis) and encourage individual voluntary action for the public good.

**Local volunteering frequently plays a pivotal role in circumstances of severe crisis. In addition to the ad hoc responses of neighbours to natural disasters, there exist diverse examples of volunteering sustaining administrative frameworks in the absence of the control or effective provision of services by the State. In the case of Kosovo, following the withdrawal of provincial autonomy by Belgrade in**

**1989 up until the armed conflict in 1999, voluntary activity within a parallel administrative framework sustained local governance and services ranging from health care and education to security and even tax collection.**

It should be noted that there is a tension between traditions of volunteering. It has sometimes been argued that in developed Northern countries volunteering has increasingly been dedicated to social welfare delivery. In many developing and transitional countries volunteering is regarded as part of social transformation:

The literature emanating from the “South” has focused on the growth and evolving role of NGOs in the developmental processes, suggesting its transformational potential... in contrast, research from the “North” has focused on the organizations themselves... concentrating on its role in service delivery and welfare provision... rather than on advocacy and social change.<sup>11</sup>

The risk here is that policy emanating in the North may ascribe rather more conservative roles to volunteering than would be found elsewhere. Indeed, there is a tendency in certain programmes to view developing country volunteers only in terms of the labour they can contribute to externally sponsored development programmes. Despite some strong feelings which have polarized debate between volunteers as activists or advocates on one side and contributors to service delivery on the other, in practice volunteers play both roles in most societies.

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

In the past few years, many agencies have preferred to describe their work as capacity-building or capacity development (CD) rather than technical assistance (TA). The concept of CD is broader than that of TA, in that it seeks to capture the concept of enhancing local capacities through an external input. External does not in this context necessarily mean international; it could be from the immediate locality, national or international, from an individual or an organization. This contrasts with the general understanding of TA as a means of filling gaps in technical capacities via the deployment of specialists drawing on their professional expertise to undertake specific tasks.

Although the term capacity development carries more positive connotations, it should be remembered that not all TA develops capacities and TA is not therefore synonymous with CD. It might be preferable for the strengthening of local and sustainable capacities to be an integral component of all TC programmes, but this is not an assumption that can be made. Elements that are key to effective capacity development include local ownership, durability or sustainability, and a high level of impact, often through a multiplier effect.

## VOLUNTEERISM IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity development is relevant to volunteering in two distinct but equally important senses. Firstly, volunteers undertake capacity development activities in many ways, and in so doing, engage with a range of individual and organizations. Secondly, one particular dimension of capacity development is the fostering of greater and more effective volunteer activity. The text below in blue on the Red Cross illustrates a commitment to both approaches: improving the spread of basic skills within society, as well as augmenting the capacity of national societies to carry out functions which include the development of a volunteer base.

**The Red Cross has long recognized the need for voluntary action within countries where its member societies operate, and enshrined this value in its founding statements in the nineteenth century. Thus, many millions of people have worked as Red Cross volunteers. To ensure that National Red Cross societies maintain adequate levels of capacity in key areas (e.g. dealing with local emergencies/first aid etc.), there exist several programmes to develop the volunteer-based character of the national societies. Some of these programmes are coordinated by the International Federation, while others are the products of local initiatives.**

As the primary concern of this paper is the specific role of volunteerism in capacity development, it is argued that voluntary action has specific values and attributes which reinforce the processes of capacity development.

Characteristics associated with volunteerism which can reinforce capacity development include the following:

### Values:

- commitment and solidarity
- value-based programmes
- belief in collective action for the public good
- commitment to human rights and gender equity

### Community ownership:

- empathy between local communities and the concept of volunteering
- a significant number of volunteers belong to the communities which they serve
- the direct contact with communities through living and working at the grass roots
- the reciprocity of exchanging skills and experiences

### Institutional basis:

- a generally lower level of institutional self-interest by volunteer placement agencies in perpetuating posts and dependence
- the synergies of being able to simultaneously work at different levels, producing complementarity within a programme
- the increased priority given to “soft skills” such as facilitation, communication and dedication to the overall processes of development, rather than short-term isolated technical inputs
- the use of regional and national volunteers by some international agencies which significantly reduces culture clash, and ensures a better “fit” of programmes to local needs and institutions
- the fact that volunteers are generally requested by their hosts, rather than being imposed as a condition of funding or other assistance.

### Sustainability:

- collective organizational capacity-building increases sustainability
- local rather than external resources are mobilized
- spreading capacity development throughout organizations and communities leads to higher levels of capacity retention than the traditional TA counterpart model. Thus, volunteering provides capacities for the many rather than just the one.

This list is certainly not exhaustive, nor do all individual volunteers display all of these virtues. Indeed, as mentioned above, there are cases where poor use of volunteers has resulted in their recreating the same problems found in technical cooperation in general.

### How Volunteering Contributes to Capacity Development

In terms of direct capacity development activity, individual volunteers can be observed to be operating at several distinct levels. While some volunteer-based programmes choose to focus on just one of these areas, there are an increasing number which operate at different levels simultaneously in order to obtain synergies through coordinated action, as well as to ensure that weaknesses on one front do not constrain opportunities on another. For example, while a great deal of work with returnees was carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina by both local and international volunteers in areas such as peace-building and physical reconstruction, other volunteers sought to draw up basic legislation which could facilitate the emergence of local civil society.

## The Individual Level

The training of individuals has been the mainstay of many volunteer service programmes, in the form of traditional teaching in formal and informal settings, other types of adult training or the use of counterparts. Although there is a recognition that capacity development must go beyond the individual to address organizational concerns and needs, it is a truism that learning starts with individuals. Whether through a volunteer service placement, a local Civil Society Organization (CSO) providing informal education in areas not covered by formal education, or individuals at community level working with people to improve their literacy, there are many applications for this level of basic capacity development.

**In Manila, volunteers meet children every week to read books, draw and paint at a street library. Not only volunteers run the programme; the older boys and girls in the community take more and more initiative to support other children. Fernando, now 19, has been involved in the street libraries for 10 years and organizes reading sessions for children in his neighbourhood.**

Source International Movement ATD Fourth World

## The Community Level

There are numerous volunteers working at the community level, on the basis of both formal volunteering arrangements and informal local mechanisms. They provide capacity development as well as other contributions, such as community construction projects, education, health and other services, civic action, lobbying and advocacy. The collective impact of these resources is overwhelming given the almost universal acceptance and scale of volunteerism.

**It is the individual farmer or fisherman... who decides to adopt sustainable cultivation or fishing practices...**

**The active participation of rural people in pursuing sustainability objectives can best be promoted through local community organizations. Such organizations are based on voluntary membership and may include community councils, peasant unions, water users, pastoral groups, workers associations or cooperatives...**

UNDP/FAO 1996<sup>12</sup>

## The Intermediary Level

In recent years, there has been a move away from the provision of technical expertise in particular sectors. This is due to a recognition that the failure of many development programmes has had more to do with management or organizational weaknesses within intermediary organizations (e.g. NGOs and other civil society organizations, or local government) than a deficit in specific technical skills.

Many agencies have realized that to ensure greater impact, they need to understand and focus upon building capacity at an organizational level. An increasing proportion of programmes now focus on the needs of an organization rather than the individuals within it or the technical requirements identified by sectoral specialists. Such an approach calls for a greater emphasis on skills such as facilitation and organizational analysis rather than specific technical competencies. Volunteering has proved to be particularly suited in responding to such needs.

**An NGO in South Asia was experiencing several management problems, which were beginning to affect its work. One of the major issues was a lack of a financial management system. Three local volunteers – two of whom were accountants – provided support over a period of three months to review the accounts and, more importantly, to devise and write down financial procedures for the NGO to follow. Staff were trained in the use of these systems and how to maintain them. This went a long way towards re-establishing the credibility of the organization among staff, donors and peer groups.**

## The Private Sector

Private sector organizations and personnel, whose involvement in many countries has traditionally been of a philanthropic nature, are now contributing to capacity development work. This includes the voluntary provision of vocational and professional training by private sector personnel under the auspices of international service agencies, as well as other forms such as the ethical training initiatives which have witnessed a more sophisticated cross-fertilization of commercial and voluntary sector values and methods. In some parts of the world, new forms of private sector community-based volunteering are being developed, while other companies actively support company volunteering schemes.<sup>13</sup> Both the staff and the management of corporations have encouraged business volunteering.

**In India, the Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust has organized many seminars, training programmes and exhibitions encouraging large corporations and other private businesses to provide volunteers specifically to mentor “Young entrepreneurs” and small businesses in a programme called Business & Youth Starting Together.**

### The Public Sector

Formal volunteering, perhaps surprisingly, is often tied to the public sector. Despite the occasional reluctance of the state to recognize its importance, research has shown that voluntary work is critical in enabling the public sector to function. The majority of volunteers in some countries are engaged in social and welfare services under local government administration. These include health, education and other welfare services for the disabled, the sick and the aged.<sup>14</sup> The voluntary associations and individual volunteers which keep schools, clinics, hospitals and residential homes functioning are innumerable. Another significant area is the contribution of volunteers at national government level where, for example, many of the national consultative groups, called upon by the move towards democratic governance, usually operate on a voluntary basis.

**A reforming psychiatrist took over an ancient and ailing state-run hospital for the mentally ill in the highlands of Peru, which housed patients who had mostly languished for many years. Seeking ways of accelerating the rate at which patients were released, he invited an elderly local volunteer to teach or re-introduce weaving to many of the female patients. While this was initially conceived merely as a more productive pastime, it quickly transpired that the women in the weaving classes were recovering from their ailments faster than previously. Not long after, discharge rates were up and the women were able to leave the hospital with a vocational skill. So successful was the programme that spare land was lent to the hospital and another local volunteer came to help patients cultivate potatoes and other local crops. Patients were thus able to leave and obtain jobs in agriculture. The average stay in the hospital was reduced from ten years or more to a matter of a few months representing both a reduction in costs and an improvement in the well-being of the patients.**

### Institutional Development

Institution building encompasses more than just organizational or technical/sectoral development, and relates closely to the development of social capital within a given society. One can argue that volunteering contributes to the fulfilment of wider societal goals beyond the achievement of narrow aims and provision of specific services, and engenders greater commitment and public awareness. Volunteering is clearly a significant indicator that a popula-

tion is engaging in activities and processes which contribute to the creation and sustaining of common or public goods. The capacities of whole societies can be enhanced through a strong volunteer ethic. Voluntary action contributes to pluralism of organizational forms and the bolstering of networks of people and communities. It helps ensure, moreover, that the space between the state and the individual is not left as a vacuum.

It is recognized that one of the great contributions of volunteers of all kinds is their ability to cross societal and organizational lines, a function which we might describe as relational volunteering. In cases where volunteers from different origins or organizations work together, they can often more effectively break down the barriers between different regions and institutions. A recent example of this relational quality of volunteering is offered by the activities of NGO leaders in Cyprus, most of whom are volunteers drawn from diverse professional contexts, including state, commercial and social services sectors. It is encouraging to see how, in attempting to rebuild civil society in a divided country, these leaders are able to draw upon their different backgrounds to achieve a range of goals. Another example drawn from the same region is offered by the mutual voluntary aid exchanged between Greece and Turkey, when earthquakes struck both countries a few years ago. The voluntary collaboration between these two populations has subsequently led to an official Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries regarding future disasters.

**Twinning programmes can often provide relational volunteering. One such scheme between towns in Senegal and France led to the reconstruction of a local market which in turn drew in people from the rural areas as well as opening the town to trade from outside. The twinning arrangement led to multiple new relationships being built.**

In more formal scenarios, volunteers have proved able to “speak” across frontiers to share information and experiences, to network, to engage in multiple partnerships, and to bring bodies together through both the conscious use of volunteers in different spheres as well as planned programmes.

### Peace-Building

A related area in which volunteering has taken on an increased importance is that of peace-building, with both local and international volunteers engaging in various forms of conflict resolution activity. Here, capacity development is integral to building learning and understanding through exchanges and joint activities. Volunteers working in “peace brigades” have been able to win the confidence of conflict-affected communities by proving themselves as honest brokers capable of bringing warring groups together. In other contexts, international services and local

volunteers have been able to contribute towards building the capacity, strength and depth of civil society through civic education for voters and their elected representatives.

### New Challenges

In the past few years, new challenges have emerged for all levels of volunteers as government to government aid has increasingly taken the form of all-inclusive packages conditional upon certain forms of public governance and citizen participation. Whereas international assistance was previously tied to projects, it is often now related to entire sectors or overall budgetary support. This reveals the intent to introduce voluntary participation in policy level discussions and improved governance over resources. Relatively new ideas such as Comprehensive Development Frameworks or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) assume that civil society is sufficiently strong to engage in serious debates over economic policy decisions and budgetary allocations. These developments provide opportunities for communities, the voluntary sector and service volunteers to work together in order to jointly review and engage in such processes. However, this requires the collation of community experiences, the review of financial data, the preparation of advocacy materials and the development of necessary skills.

Several groups are also concerned with and challenged by the need to engage with Sector Wide Programmes (SWAPS), which may in fact exclude many stakeholders because so many key discussions take place at a high level between official aid agency representatives and local ministers. The challenge here is to bring the views of communities to these debates, and civil society generally and volunteers from both the state and non-state backgrounds can play a key role in this process.

**In Indonesia, for example, a major national level education programme currently being implemented has sought to increase the level of community participation by parents and other stakeholders by developing new forms of local level voluntary action, governance and monitoring. In other countries, parent-teacher associations have provided a key element of community involvement in education, well beyond simply raising funds. In Brazil, private sector and community collaboration has led to improvements in schools and raised scholastic levels.**

A good SWAP should ensure the inclusion of local volunteers at a range of levels: from expert advisers to those offering grass-roots community perspectives.

## The Main Strengths of Volunteerism in

### Capacity Development

There are several comparative advantages that volunteers hold in a development context. An understanding of what volunteering actually brings to capacity development can point us towards some possible new solutions to old problems.

#### Fostering Ownership

Through the direct involvement of local and other volunteers with poor people, communities and organizations, problems of hosts failing to own the capacity development processes can be avoided.

One very potent combination can be found where local and international (or other external) volunteers work together. Such cooperation can engender a greater sense of ownership of the process among local groups, while the external volunteers are encouraged to view the host community rather than their recruitment agency as their primary point of reference. Combinations of this kind can include professional volunteer training and guiding other, untrained, volunteers; external volunteers reinforcing local efforts (e.g. election monitoring, disaster relief); or the kind of mix of foreign and national volunteers now often found in the programmes of agencies such as UN Volunteers and others. The International Year of Volunteer did a great deal to encourage societies to look to their own volunteer sources and to mobilize them for public means. There is, however, a need to ensure a more active follow-up of the commitments made during the IYV to ensure an enabling environment that allows volunteerism to grow and maximize its contribution to national development.

#### Bolstering International Exchange and Solidarity

In today's world, boundaries are increasingly flexible and the scope of voluntary actions can more easily transcend frontiers. This trend has encouraged the globalization of advocacy efforts, notably the orchestrated campaigns against land mines which saw myriad volunteers across numerous countries simultaneously undertaking different actions which shared a common aim and engendered a sense of international solidarity. This dimension of volunteering was noted several years ago in an early review of OXFAM entitled "Bridge of People", referring to OXFAM's role as a bridge between the hundreds of thousands of volunteers engaged in fundraising, other activities in the U.K. and the many people engaged in grass-roots community work throughout the developing world.<sup>15</sup>

The nature of cross-border volunteering has been epitomized more recently in several initiatives in promoting on-line volunteering, in which volunteers use the Internet to reach groups in other countries and contribute to their capacity development. On-line volunteering helps to remove the distinctions between the local and the international.

### Sharing Knowledge

Traditional technical cooperation was based around the concept of the external expert and assumptions of a one-way flow of knowledge. This hegemony of the technical specialist has been vigorously contested over the past decade. In some senses, the development of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques and related work by the Robert Chambers and others, has helped us to value local and indigenous knowledge and to question the notion that external “scientific” knowledge is always superior.<sup>16</sup> Volunteers living in closer proximity to local people were in many instances among the early converts to participatory approaches to development. They often proved more inclined and more able to utilize local knowledge, while also having the capacity to draw on external ideas and technologies where necessary. It should be added that this “sharing knowledge” approach acknowledges that there is more than one path towards development and that developing countries have the right to “trial and error” when exploring their partnership with others.

Insufficient attention has been paid to the effect different cultural environments may have on capacity development. There has been a tendency to attempt the implementation of standardized capacity development approaches without due adaptation and piloting in different socio-cultural contexts. In light of the many kinds of volunteers active in an impressive array of contexts, recognition should be given to volunteer experiences in different situations as a rich source of expertise from which much learning can be derived. The overall impact of development cooperation could be greatly improved if the experiences of local and international volunteers were more effectively absorbed and fed into the development of new or amended capacity development approaches.

As noted above, on-line volunteering is on the increase, thus enabling volunteers – at almost no cost – to reach a far greater number of people than would be possible through the traditional face-to-face working. The on-line volunteering system is developing its potential to develop the social capital in areas where previous gaps between the educated and the poor were seemingly insurmountable and where information was inaccessible to all but a few.

## Promoting Participation

Many volunteer programmes derive from participatory approaches which are closely linked with the development of civil society. Several of the formal volunteer placing agencies have adopted dedicated participatory development programmes.<sup>17</sup> In part, this commitment comes from the experience of volunteers working in communities rather than in offices far from those they are supposed to assist. Many local and international volunteers share the day-to-day realities of communities with whom they are working, thus helping to break down barriers. Volunteers and their hosts find mutual benefit in an “immersion and engagement” approach to development.

Participation is not unique to voluntary action, but there is a strong symbiosis between community voluntary action and participation. There is, however, a debate surrounding the degree to which participatory approaches are merely instrumental or have an empowering impact. An instrumental approach implies the use of participation to ensure the better delivery of externally designed and managed programmes. By contrast, participatory programmes can use the empowering nature of participation and its capacity to strengthen the autonomy of a community.

Amidst varying perspectives on this question is a general consensus that voluntary action should derive from people's free will and the absence of any compulsion to “volunteer”. Such issues are highly relevant to the debates over the extent to which some agency-initiated voluntary action amounts to little more than an attempt to ensure project costs are shared with communities. Participation and voluntary action should represent more than just cost sharing, or the seeking of short-term financial gain. In some respects, the issue is not one of hard-and-fast definitions, but rather one of intention and degree. Thus, the World Food Programme (WFP) has recognized, for example, that its Food for Work programmes can, if misused, undermine local capacities. However, when well implemented, they can contribute to the strengthening of local organizations and capacity by encouraging joint voluntary actions with developmental goals. Considered and conscientious planning is required to ensure that local initiatives are encouraged and sustained rather than suppressed or undermined by inappropriate forms of support. In situations in which volunteers are invited to provide capacity enhancing support, their independence can help ensure that it is the most appropriate competencies which are strengthened rather than those deemed most politically or administratively expedient. In this sense volunteering can contribute to the “citizen's right to participate”.

## Providing Facilitation

In the context of developing capacities, it has been recognized that it is not sufficient simply to “do a job well”. The intention and commitment to developing capacity requires different skills of the professional volunteer. Facilitation and teaching skills, as well as awareness of organizational and cultural mechanisms, are required to ensure effective capacity development. Although some large volunteer agencies have been moving towards placing greater value on such skills, there is still some way to go, and a more rigorous understanding of capacity development approaches and models required.<sup>18</sup> To develop competencies, facilitation calls more on the human qualities and sensitivity of the development worker than on their technical expertise.

## Improving Accountability

Insufficient accountability to local communities is a common problem, which closely relates to that of lack of local ownership. Undue donor dominance has tended to reinforce the commonly held perception of projects belonging to the donor rather than the people. In many instances, however, the ability of volunteers to act as honest brokers between donors and recipient countries has led to their acceptance as more neutral development agents, and enabled them to have greater impact in their capacity development roles. As a result, the use of local or national volunteers has increasingly been seen to enhance the credibility of donor-funded capacity development programmes.

## Promoting Governance

Local volunteers have consistently taken an active role in the governance of civil society groups which constitute important local accountability mechanisms. There has been much debate within civil society as to whether the creation of local governance structures is a better way of improving local capacities than external agencies carrying out direct service provision themselves. Some international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have consciously chosen to prioritize support to the development of local civil society, rather than establishing their own long-term offices and programmes.<sup>19</sup> In South Asia, for example, there exists a strong tradition of older local volunteers devoting considerable time and energy to passing on their own experience and skills to community, social welfare and other groups. Such volunteers typically play an advisory role or work on governance issues.

**Opportunity Trust (OT) has encouraged local businesses to participate on the boards of new branches of the organization as these are set up. The Trust’s perception is that the long-term prospects for new branches are improved by securing support from local businesses prior to the provision of any external funding. The Trust’s practice to date shows that local boards comprising individuals wil-**

ling to volunteer time and resources to the new Opportunity Trust programme are formed as a first step. Once this structure is in place, OT International may then be able to provide further funding or technical support.<sup>20</sup>

### Ensuring Sustainability

There is a visible connection between the use of volunteers and the development of local social capital and capacity. Volunteer-based agencies generally exhibit lower levels of institutional self-interest in the development world. The provision of capacity development, advisory and other services with these agencies also tends to be tailored more to the demands and requirements of the hosts, rather than the supply of the skill resources the donor finds it expedient to contribute. Although the recurrent issue of differential salary rates still poses an obstacle to financial sustainability in some circumstances, most volunteer agencies are aware of the need to ensure that engagement reinforces rather than undermines local sustainability. From experience, the promotion of volunteerism and the involvement of local volunteers clearly contribute to the development of locally sustainable structures and services.

Societies whose value systems embrace the concept of private action for public good offer an excellent basis for the promotion of volunteering by local professionals. The classic example of the local bank manager volunteering as honorary treasurer to a community group provides a model which can be replicated in many societies and contexts. Common interests may bring citizens from very diverse backgrounds together, e.g. parent support groups working for children's educational or health needs. For many, especially (but not exclusively) the young, volunteering has the advantage of providing new experiences and is an opportunity for learning as an investment in the future. Such forms of volunteering are prevalent across many cultures and should not be regarded simply as "rich world" phenomena. There need to be more programmes that encourage local level volunteers and promote their status as important actors in developmental activities. In some cultures, prizes and awards are used to show recognition of volunteers, while in others, faith-based organizations provide support. What is most appropriate and effective will probably be culturally specific, but once programmes are implemented the volunteers will more than repay the limited investment involved.

There is an added gain from supporting volunteering in that it spreads capacities further than a small number of people. The possible impact of developing the capacities of large numbers of volunteers is that it aids capacity retention, a perennial problem in traditional TA programmes. An increased spread of capacities also adds to the multiplier effect of the initial capacity development programme.

## The Cost Dimension

As noted above, volunteers in many countries provide an enormous contribution in terms of labour time. The studies quoted illustrate that in employment terms, almost 50 per cent extra labour was committed by volunteers over and above that of salaried personnel in the voluntary sector. Not all volunteers come totally free of costs, but those that require daily allowances, or other payments, still represent very good value for money compared to non-voluntary alternatives. Most evaluations of formal volunteer-involving programmes accept that volunteers are very cost effective, particularly when using local volunteers. Keeping costs in line with local standards has also been mentioned in the context of longer-term sustainability, and one characteristic of volunteer workers – including foreigners – is the capacity to adjust to or even adopt local living standards.

**Volunteering is an essential input for major global health campaigns such as the global polio eradication initiative. Led by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and in partnership with NGOs, this initiative has been driven by volunteers around the world. In 2000, an estimated 10 million people volunteered to support the immunization of 550 million children. The vast majority of these volunteers were working in their own communities, providing their time to ensure that the campaign was successful. WHO calculated that such support was worth \$10 billion.<sup>21</sup>**

A more in-depth study of different types of local and international volunteering would also be valuable. There are many small voluntary initiatives which link individual churches together across international boundaries, of small-scale programmes for student volunteers, and schemes by which companies encourage volunteering both in their own communities and further afield. There exist innumerable twinning arrangements between communities and organizations, whether based around faith, commercial ties, professional associations, the arts, or other areas of shared interest or experience. Those mentioned above all have at their core reciprocity of learning and a sharing of skills and experiences.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. Volunteerism and Capacity Development:**

#### **The Way Forward**

This final section will examine some of the issues and opportunities for the future of volunteering in the context of capacity development. It is argued that if properly supported, volunteerism could generate many times its present contribution to development. Volunteering is already established as a major component of civil society within communities, national societies and internationally, and the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001 went further towards helping volunteers recognize their role as part of a global movement. Volunteering needs now to be more consciously factored into development and specifically capacity development processes and programmes.

#### **VOLUNTEERISM: REALIZING THE POTENTIAL FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

To further release the drive of volunteerism for development, there is a need to know more about its reality and potential in the context of each country. The result of such a mapping exercise could provide an important basis for further planning on volunteerism for capacity development.

#### **Research**

As noted at the very beginning of this paper, research has only recently started to look at the size, scope and nature of volunteerism worldwide, and even then usually only in the context of the “voluntary sector”. There is a clear need for resources to focus on further longer-term research as well as operational “mapping” style exercises. Indeed, the execution of such surveys itself requires capacity development, as there are very few such studies and even fewer carried out by local agencies or institutes. Although groups such as CIVICUS are developing indices for the strength of civil society, there is still a need for tools and frameworks which would enable us to both understand and promote volunteerism in general and its role in capacity development in particular. The provision of localized information should enable programme designers to better utilize local voluntary resources as well as ensure a positive link with such resources rather than constraining such energy.

**UNV and the Independent Sector produced guidelines for “Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit”, published during the IYV. Several studies are now underway which look at volunteering in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Ghana, Lao PDR, Poland, South Africa and South Korea. One of**

**the objectives of these studies will be to better understand volunteering in these contexts as a way of strengthening and channelling its energy into national social development.<sup>23</sup> In time, it is hoped that by properly valuing the contributions of volunteers, those will be incorporated into “national accounting” which in turn will bring greater recognition of its importance to national development.**

Research should also explore in greater detail local or culturally formed concepts and practice of volunteering. As noted elsewhere, informal volunteering is often underestimated and under-valued in terms of its contribution both to social safety nets and developmental activities. Furthermore, it has also been pointed out that the term “volunteering” may not be recognized by all “volunteers” as applying to them. In other words, there may be established forms of volunteering which are not even recognized as such in certain cultures or within sectors of the population, despite their invaluable contributions to human development.<sup>24</sup>

Improved research at national and international levels can help us support local forms of volunteering and design programmes to promote and encourage existing volunteering. The implications of the large number of women volunteers in many societies should also be considered in the design of such programmes.<sup>25</sup> There are doubtless other specific areas in which research programmes can assist volunteers in practical development as well as engaging with socially excluded or marginal groups – the relative lack of such studies presently acts as a constraint on many development programmes and capacity development in particular.

### **Volunteers and Reconstruction**

The challenges posed by the aftermath of war require the re-emergence of civil society and the reconstruction of social capital. There are an increasing number of countries going through post-conflict reconstruction, for example: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Eritrea, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. Although volunteers have excelled in dealing with the immediate problems of relief and political reconstruction (election monitoring, civic education), there has been insufficient awareness of the longer-term need for the development of local level volunteering and civil society. New capacity-building initiatives should systematically examine what scope there is for drawing on local volunteer groups as a human resource as well as ways of nurturing the further development of volunteerism at the grass-roots level.

The fostering of the voluntary sector and, specifically, traditions of volunteering can harness additional human resources for post-conflict reconstruction. Moreover, it also contributes to the rebuilding of the social fabric of associations, inter-personal relationships, and commitment to public services and facilities.

A key consideration here relates to the development amongst volunteers of the skills required for post-conflict reconstruction and civil society building. In the case of Kosovo, mentioned above, it became clear once the conflict had ended that the methods of working which volunteers had developed for the maintenance of a parallel system of public services in preceding years were much less well suited to the more bureaucratic modes of governance required for a formal and transparent post-conflict system of administration. In such a context, a couple of international volunteers working on enabling legislation and government attitudes and policies towards volunteering could have as great an impact as an army of people working on direct reconstruction efforts!<sup>26</sup> The mobilization and encouragement of local volunteers will always have the ability to outweigh paid personnel in terms of scale and sustainability. However, there will be special challenges in reconstruction contexts in promoting volunteering which entails specialized capacity development programmes. Even in cases where there has been a tradition of local volunteering, the social and organizational structures which accompanied such traditions may have been severely disrupted by the conflict or emergency. Social groups may have been divided by the crisis and local authority programmes closed, while social networks, faith groups and kinship ties may all have been negatively affected. Conscious plans will be necessary to help ordinary people to channel their energies into voluntary reconstruction efforts, and external bodies can help in these processes.

**In Vukovar, Croatia, there were many small programmes sponsored by groups such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) designed to assist local voluntary efforts, including provision of a venue for minority Serb women to meet to re-establish their battered community and reach out to others in the same situation. Support for student and professional groups to organize social and physical reconstruction programmes across ethnic lines was almost as important as the product of their joint efforts.**

### Volunteers in Transitional Countries

In transitional countries - particularly those formerly subject to authoritarian systems of government – changes in regime have often left gaps formerly filled by central state entities or the dominant political party. In many such societies, it is youth associations, women's groups and other state-controlled organizations that take key roles in providing public and other services. The disappearance of these organizations thus needs replacement by autonomous civil society organizations

capable of providing similar services and social “glue”.

Such organizations both require and can promote an ethic of volunteerism, and provide opportunities for prospective volunteers. In many instances, however, the conditions for vibrant civil society growth are still lacking: the necessary legal frameworks may be absent; people may be suspicious that civil society groups too closely resemble pre-transition state organisms; or the state may fear civil society as a political opposition. Donors sometimes assume that civil society will emerge spontaneously despite constraints such as continuing resistance from state bodies, which retain old prejudices and a state-led approach to development.

### Working with Traditional Forms of Volunteering

There are many reasons why local traditions of volunteerism and community work in civil society require support. The lists of local forms of voluntary work are almost endless and vary greatly between countries. There are myriad types of self-help groups, other forms of reciprocal labour, local groups helping neighbours in distress, savings clubs, credit circles, parent-run pre-schools, church or mosque-based welfare and educational services, health committees around local clinics, representational and membership groups. Sometimes the mere mapping of voluntary organizations can be a major task in itself. Such exercises can form a prelude to capacity-building programmes and offer opportunities to further encourage voluntary groups, or identify which ones are willing and able to participate in specific developmental activities.

## DEVELOPING CAPACITY THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

Capacity development programmes should realize the potentially double benefit they can draw from properly tapping volunteerism. First, developing the capacity of volunteering will further improve and expand its contribution to development. Secondly, the same process will generate a multiplier effect of capacity development at the societal level.

### Enhancing the Capacity of Volunteerism for Development

*“Efforts should be made to strengthen the exchanges and cooperation among volunteers from different countries and further encourage South/South volunteer exchange programmes, whilst exploring the establishment of the African Volunteer Corps.”*

*Draft Johannesburg Volunteer Declaration, Volunteer Vision Regional Conference, 16–17 May 2002*

To achieve more in the realm of capacity-building for development, an increased contribution could be made through the development of capacity among volunteers throughout any given society. Support given to volunteers and the organizations that support them must recognize the importance of their independence and free will; volunteers should not merely be regarded as unpaid workers for large agencies of whatever origin. The contribution of volunteers can be immense and their potential for sustainable, low cost, and culturally adapted inputs should not be underestimated.

There are an increasing number of programmes dedicated to improving the capacity of the voluntary sector and of volunteering. Examples include work on legal frameworks,<sup>27</sup> self-regulatory systems for NGOs, training for board members, development of national or local volunteer councils to place and support local volunteers and so on. In some countries, organizations such as UNDP have been able to set up resource centres to encourage the voluntary sector; elsewhere, major donors are investing in new civil society support programmes. There is a great deal which could be further done to help strengthen volunteerism worldwide, including:<sup>28</sup>

- Promoting an environment (legal, financial, cultural, etc.) which enables the encouragement and support of local volunteerism. Working with national authorities in creating policy, legislation and a public opinion favourable to national voluntary services and bodies.
- Providing advice and models for bodies such as national councils of voluntary work, volunteer centres, volunteer involving organizations and other alternative frameworks, which can mobilize, support and coordinate local voluntary actions. This is especially important where such activities are still dispersed and isolated socially and geographically.
- Contributing to a climate of trust where prejudices related to volunteers may still exist, through publicity for voluntary work, prizes for outstanding commitment by individuals, high profile volunteering from popular figures such as football stars.
- Assisting the public and authorities to understand the different types of volunteering, how each may contribute to development, and where different types of individuals – from the poor themselves to professional experts – can contribute to a single development effort.
- Providing support services to volunteers and the organizations they work with and for. Specifically, to strengthen the organizational development of such bodies, as well as provide examples of organizational and inter-organizational models and partnerships involving volunteers.

- Improving the interface and nature of partnerships with key stakeholders, including local and national authorities, the private sector, civil society and other development institutions regarding the use of and resources offered by volunteers at different levels.
- Providing funds where necessary to allow the full potential of volunteers to be realized, and to break “bottle necks” and other constraints on the development of volunteerism, for example, through local authorities or trust funds.
- Ensuring that all governments recognize and value the contribution of voluntary action to the strengthening of civil society and building of social capital.

### Volunteerism: A Capacity Development Multiplier

Enlarging development dialogue and planning to the volunteer community will undoubtedly foster ownership of capacity-building programmes, as it broadens the constituency of reference for such programmes. In addition, the resulting diversity of partners should generate a more dynamic interface and interaction, thereby increasing capacity among the stakeholders to organize, manage and coordinate relationships and processes. It is known that development initiatives and results mushroom where there is space for and facility of lively and constructive interactions among different socio-economic groups.

**In a remote part of The Gambia in West Africa, a village development committee (VDC) was rather dormant until a female member brought into the VDC deliberations concerns from local women groups struggling to address a range of daily challenges related to health services, children’s schooling, maternity, food and income, etc.**

**The Committee then started to scan possible sources of support from other levels including a number of international NGOs. Parallel to this, the Committee realized it had to call on various local groups e.g. Parents/Teachers Association, local women groups, farmers’ associations... to engage in various development initiatives which outside assistance could build upon. This process gradually intensified and generated visible results such as a village pharmacy, the building of teachers’ accommodation, and the construction and periodic organization of a village market.**

Given the spontaneous involvement of volunteerism in development, capacity acquired by volunteer groups in generating visible results becomes a strong element of attraction for new membership. When such a process is tangible enough to others in surrounding areas, it provides a fertile ground for replication through imitation by

comparable groups. This phenomenon is well illustrated in different countries with large networks of volunteer groups that have benefited from capacity development programmes initially launched with only a few groups. This happened, for example, with the NAAM women groups in the Sahelian Africa in organizing soap making and trade; with the Sri Lankan Sarvodaya Mahila groups related to setting up and managing community kindergartens; as well as with the village microcredit schemes now spread throughout West Africa.

Capacity development programmes should also give particular attention to the strengths and potential of individual volunteer workers. As outlined earlier, experienced volunteer workers can display a set of “soft skills” that prove to be critical for capacity development. With approaches sensitive to people and culture, volunteer workers gain trust and confidence that are necessary to enable local partners to take the lead and become gradually empowered.

The inclusion of volunteers in capacity development programmes helps ensure that these programmes are more responsive to the needs of clients, and by being close to clients and involving them, volunteers make the management of such programmes more transparent hence improving accountability to sponsors and client groups alike. On this basis, architects of capacity development programmes should be encouraged to draw on local volunteers as a key human resource and promote volunteerism at the local level as an important capacity development multiplier. This could be done by:

- Exploring the potential of senior professional volunteers. In an increasing number of countries we are now witnessing significant growth in the proportion of older professional people with redundant skills which could be harnessed to social aims.<sup>29</sup>
- Disseminating ideas and experiences where volunteers have led or been incorporated into development programmes.
- Encouraging the assessment of local volunteer involvement as an indicator of local ownership for capacity development initiatives, and as a method of evaluating sustainability and accountability.
- Building on the wide range of volunteer experiences to develop approaches adapted and appropriate to different cultures.
- Engaging volunteer workers as a priority in situations where facilitation skills are deemed critical to capacity enhancement in the widest sense of the term.
- Ensuring that as new approaches to capacity development emerge, volunteers at all levels understand and participate in testing and refining these models.

It is expected that international pressure for peace, as well as a growing commitment to developmental ideals, will inspire many more people to engage in productive means of enhancing the capacities and strengths of their own societies. In that context, capacity development programmes should remember that volunteering provides an opportunity for all citizens to engage in a wide variety of activities. Therefore, such programmes should encourage and enable citizens to do so.

## VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANIZATIONS

Volunteer involving organizations (VIOs) exist at the national and international levels. Many of them are very attuned to past and ongoing experiences of volunteering in their respective areas of focus. They therefore constitute important institutional memories of what has worked and what has not in volunteerism for development. Engaging in a serious and productive dialogue with them would help, on one hand, to avoid re-inventing the wheel in the efforts to promote volunteerism for development and, on the other, to enable capacity development programmes to build upon field-tested approaches and practices.

VIOs can play a particularly important role in facilitating an appropriate and greater involvement of volunteer workers in capacity development programmes. Their usually large network at country and intercountry levels make them invaluable sources of experienced individuals willing to volunteer for development. VIOs should also be able to contribute to the multiplier effect of capacity development through spreading the impact to far greater numbers of people and hence make a major contribution to meeting mid-decade and other development goals.

## VOLUNTEERING AND THE STATE

In addition to some of the action points raised elsewhere in this section, it is worth stressing the special roles of governments and intergovernmental institutions regarding the protection, promotion and use of volunteers. Several studies have argued that there is a need for a more strategic approach to volunteer policies and inclusion of volunteers in national development programmes. This may include the legal frameworks required as well as funding for volunteer support mechanisms and infrastructures. There may also be a need to raise public awareness of the value and potential of volunteering for both users and volunteers. This will be especially important where volunteering is still not totally accepted by society (as in many transitional countries). Other possibilities may inclu-

de the promotion of volunteering among specific age groups (youth or retired) and obtaining private sector support. These different programmes are all predicated on the state, often with international support, ensuring the appropriate enabling environment to permit the growth of volunteering.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This paper has highlighted the importance of the contributions made by volunteers to development. It has also recalled the particular strengths of volunteerism in supporting capacity development processes. Although these contributions have been remarkable over the past few decades, there is yet greater potential for contributions by volunteerism if well supported and encouraged. An important aspect of this encouragement is the recognition by development planners that volunteerism should be deliberately and explicitly included in capacity development plans rather than implicitly attributed roles, or worse being completely ignored. A modest investment in national and local volunteering can pay significant rewards in terms of capacity development at many levels, from specific programme interventions to enhancing social capital. A greater recognition and support for volunteerism provides the potential for achieving international development goals and enhancing the impact of many development programmes.

#### **Endnotes**

- 1 Korten, D. (1990) *Getting to the 21st Century – Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*. USA: Kumarian Press, Chapter 14.
- 2 FOCSIV International Voluntary Service in Europe, Rome, (1999) for example, notes that over a thirty-year period, some 1,000,000 European citizens worked as volunteers for two or more years in developing countries. In 1995, 12,000 volunteers from nineteen European states worked overseas across 100 different countries.
- 3 For example, there are wide disparities between the financial and other terms and conditions of international “volunteers”, depending upon the agency they are attached to. Such disparities can in some instances be found even within the same agency. Some agencies initially established as “volunteer-sending” organizations have since changed to the extent that they no longer use volunteers at all and not even the same name. However, in popular parlance they are often still referred to as “volunteer agencies”. Other such agencies make distinctions between expert volunteers, field workers, and so on.

- 4 The significant list of 100 plus countries which sponsored the General Assembly debate on volunteering at the end of the IYV, was testament to the enhanced awareness of the importance of volunteering. The subsequent debate is also enlightening: *A Turning Point for Volunteers. Government and the United Nations System Support for Volunteering. Plenary Meetings of the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly. 5 December 2001.*
- 5 It has to be said that the volunteer sending agencies have not always been their own best advocates and there is a lack of good material from them supporting the concept of volunteering.
- 6 See Roy, Kakoli & Ziemek, Suzanne, *On the Economics of Volunteering.* ZEF/UNV, unpublished 2001. Although even this excellent paper probably fails to account for the value of widespread informal volunteering.
- 7 Salamon, L., Anheier, H., and Associates (1999) *The Emerging Sector Re-visited: A Summary.* USA: Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies.
- 8 Institute for Volunteering Research, summary of 1997 National Survey of Volunteers. <http://www.ivr.org.uk/nationalsurvey.htm>.
- 9 For example Cerfe/UNV (December 2001). *The Missing Pages: The Role of the Poor as Volunteers in Strategies for Combating Poverty.* Part three compiles data on volunteering in several societies. Also see end-note xxiii below for further references.
- 10 Clayton, A., Oakley, P., Taylor, J. (2000) *Civil Society Organisations and Service Provision.* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).
- 11 Roy and Ziemek unpublished 2001, ZEF/UNV p.8.
- 12 *Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, Strengthening the Fabric of Society, Capacity Building for Sustainable Development.* UNDP/FAO 1996.
- 13 See also *Trade and Environment; Capacity Building for Sustainable Development.* UNDP/UNCTAD 1998.
- 14 Salamon, L., Anheier, H., and Associates (1999) *Op. Cit.* Although these figures are more closely tied to the developed world results, as an indicator of possible future scenarios for developing countries they are nonetheless important. The state in many developing countries is particularly remiss in its undervaluing of the contribution of volunteers at different levels. This seems particularly unfortunate in view of the resource-deficiency of public sectors in many poor indebted countries.
- 15 Whittaker, B. (1980) *A Bridge of People.* Heinemann.
- 16 Chambers, R. (1997) *Whose Reality Counts.* London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- 17 For example for many years UNV ran a "Participatory Development Programme" until it was considered that participation had been successfully mainstreamed.

- 18 See Rick James' capacity-building study, where although many agencies confirmed their commitment to capacity-building, in reality their understanding and operational practice was often weak and confused. James, R. (1994) *Strengthening the Capacity of Southern NGO Partners*. Oxford: INTRAC OPS 5.
- 19 For example the South Asia Partnership, which was originally a Canadian initiative, promoted the creation of separate boards to oversee each local office. Others such as World Vision and WWF have a mixed portfolio of offices locally accountable to their own boards and others still run as "subsidiaries" of the parents. For more information see Gibbs, S. et. al. (2000) *Decentralised NGO Management*. Oxford: INTRAC OPS 19.
- 20 Patel, R. "Stealing Other People's Ideas is Wrong" in James, R. (2001) *Power and Partnerships*. Oxford: INTRAC.
- 21 UNV (2001) *Volunteering and the United Nations System*, p. 30.
- 22 For example see Patel, R. (2001) *Op. Cit.* Raj Patel's chapter traces the experiences of some company schemes which note the learning by professionals seconded to small Indian community groups. Elsewhere, many volunteers report how much they learn from the experience: van Doorn, A., and Hems, L. (1998) *Key Issues for Human Resource Development*. London: NCVO.
- 23 *Measuring Volunteering: A Practical Toolkit* (2001). Independent Sector and UNV; *The Volume and Economic Value of Volunteering in 4 Countries of Differing Income Levels*; Susane Ziemek, ZEF/UNV January 2002; *The Contribution of South African Volunteering Sector to Sustainable Development*. Draft by Bev Russell 2002; *Volunteering in Kazakhstan Key Findings of a National Survey, 2001*, UNV; UNV, *Status of Volunteerism in Lao PDR*. Report of the Measuring Volunteering Survey 2001 Vientiane, Lao PDR: Prepared by Okama Ekpe Brook.
- 24 See, Lukka, Priya & Ellis, Angela. "An exclusive construct?" Exploring different cultural concepts of volunteering. Institute for Volunteering Research. [www.ivr.org.uk/culturalconcepts](http://www.ivr.org.uk/culturalconcepts). Men for example are less likely to call their voluntary work for a church or youth club volunteering than women in the same society. Indeed few activists in churches regard themselves as volunteers despite the many services they may provide to the community. The young also do not always regard being a volunteer as fashionable even if they are engaged in activities which they value!
- 25 Unlike other forms of technical assistance there is a far better gender balance amongst volunteers.
- 26 Thanks to Arild Hauge, personal communication, for this reflection.
- 27 For example the work in several countries of the ICNL, Washington.

- 28 There are many other areas which we could have included here. Other ideas can be found in the annex to the GA 56/38, and Cerfe/UNV (December 2001) *The Missing Pages; The Role of the Poor as Volunteers in Strategies for Combating Poverty*.
- 29 Although the use of older volunteers is of greater interest to more developed countries with longer life expectancy and growing numbers of retired people, it is clear that in many transitional and developing countries this population has enormous potential already, as well as for the future. For UK see NCVO (2000) "Life Begins at 50". NCVO News, 112.